

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY
AT A MEETING OF THE CALDERDALE PASSENGER CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE TOWN HALL, HALIFAX
ON TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2009

PRESENT: Councillor G Wainwright (Chair)

WYPTA

T Swift

PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES

Vic Duke
Peter Melling
Neal Ricketts

Peter Stocks
John Whiteley

CALDERDALE MC

B Collins
R Goldthorpe
K Watson

Also in attendance:

M Davies	-	First
J Stewart	-	First
N Walsh	-	Halifax Bus Company (from Minute 15)

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from public representatives H Dobson, N Hull, J Sykes and E Wood and from D Haley (Northern Rail).

12. MINUTES

Further to Minute 2 - Bus Service Changes - Councillor Collins and asked whether following recent meetings there had been any further progress made by First to address local concerns in the Mixenden area. The Chairman requested that Mr Davies from First provide Councillor Collins with a detailed update at the close of the meeting. In this respect, Mr Davies advised that First planned to implement a circular service through Illingworth via Pellon to Halifax in order to resolve the issues. A consultation exercise in this regard was currently ongoing. Mr Davies assured the Committee that First would do everything possible to improve local concerns in Mixenden.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2008 be approved.

13. MEMBER FEEDBACK

The Committee considered a report advising members of the feedback received at the meeting of the Committee held on 7 October 2008 and to report on action taken.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

14. INFORMATION REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on information regarding current developments and issues affecting the Calderdale District.

Passenger Information Enhancements at Rail Stations

The Committee received an update on the scheme to improve the Long Line Public Announcement (LLPA) and Customer Information Systems (CIS) at West Yorkshire rail stations.

It was reported that a new centralised passenger information control system controlling 53 stations would be installed in the Leeds Information Control Centre, which would be operational by Summer 2009. It was also reported that new DDA compliant information screens would be installed by March 2009. Additional screens at Brighouse station were welcomed.

Halifax Rail Station Update

Members were informed that the canopy and footbridge at the station would be refurbished with works commencing in April 2009. The work would also renew damaged timbers/glazing, install new lighting and repainting. It was anticipated that the works would be completed by September 2009. It was also noted that Metro was working with Network Rail to secure funding for Halifax via the National Station Improvement Programme. Implementation of the proposal would be subject to approval/agreement of a potential funding package by all stakeholders.

The Committee requested that consideration be given to improving access to the rail station forecourt for pedestrians walking from the bus station and town centre. The Chair advised that Calderdale Council and Metro were aware of the difficulties faced by pedestrians. A long term solution, including the possibility of re-opening the third platform at the station, which would allow exit from the station onto Church Street, was being considered.

Service Changes

The Committee was advised of the minor service changes affecting the Calderdale area scheduled to take place on the weekend of 31 January/

1 February 2009. Details of the changes would be set out to members in a copy of the Changing Times leaflet.

First Restructure

Members were advised of the reorganisation to First's operations in Yorkshire. The new Managing Director was Dave Alexander who would be supported by 4 other Directors including Richard Harris and Ian Humphrey.

Boxing Day Services

The Committee was updated on the performance of the Boxing Day bus services, which had been funded by Metro. Services had operated on core routes to and from the centres of Leeds, Huddersfield and several other areas where it was known that a significant number of retailers were opening for business.

It was suggested that consideration be given to running the popular 508 service from Halifax to Leeds on Boxing Day 2009.

Realtime Update

Members were informed that over 900 real time units had now been installed within shelters across the five Districts. Positive feedback had been received from bus operators and members of the public regarding the quality of information provided. However, it was noted that there were some minor issues with some displays, which Metro was working closely with ACIS to rectify.

Concern was expressed about the issue of delayed services disappearing from screens, which caused confusion and frustration to waiting passengers. In response, Metro officers advised that they were aware of this problem and were pressing ACIS to find a solution. It was also explained that in order for the real time system to be accurate it was essential for the tracking equipment fitted on operators' vehicles to be in working order. At present 90% of buses had been installed with the equipment and performance was increasing month by month.

Halifax Travel Centre

The Committee was advised that the newly refurbished Halifax travel centre had reopened at the beginning of December 2008. Positive feedback had been received from many customers regarding the improvement to the centre.

Local Transport Act

The Committee noted the key changes to the Authority's responsibilities as a result of the Local Transport Act legislation. In this respect, the Passenger Transport Authority would change its name to the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) from February 2009.

FreeCityBus/FreeTownBus

Members discussed whether there was an intention to introduce a FreeTownBus service within Calderdale, as this was the only district which did not operate the service. In response, the Chairman stated that in order to implement the service Calderdale Council would have to jointly fund the venture with Metro. In his opinion, he felt that there were a number of regular bus services already in operation, which provided travel about the town centre area. He was, however, concerned that short distance travel was not promoted extensively and suggested that this be remedied. In response, the Committee members commented that there were a number of shopping outlets located outside the town centre, which were not accessible by current bus services and that a FreeTownBus service would improve accessibility to these popular sites.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

15. CONSULTATION ITEMS -

- (a) Low Carbon Demonstration Pilot**
- (b) Carbon Reduction Marketing Campaign**
- (c) Economic Climate and the Public Transport Industry**

Low Carbon Demonstration Pilot

The Committee was informed that Metro was seeking funding from the Department for Transport to develop a Low Carbon Demonstration Project. The project would focus on the provision of a small fleet of hybrid buses and a package of supporting measures to reinforce Metro's aim to promote change in travel behaviour and achieve modal shift. It was reported that Metro and the council had discussed this issue and the preferred option would be to introduce the pilot on the 503 route, which traversed an air quality management area. The council had also committed to providing additional bus lanes to support the services.

The Committee welcomed the concept, but questioned whether it would be practicable to introduce such a scheme within the Calderdale district, particularly on the proposed 503 bus route. Members were of the opinion that it would be difficult to introduce traffic priority measures, such as bus lanes, in areas such as between Ainley Top to Huddersfield and along Huddersfield Road in Halifax due to limited highway capacity.

Comment was made that in order to reduce carbon emissions significantly it was necessary to improve the quality and performance of bus services in order to encourage car drivers to use public transport.

Carbon Reduction Marketing Campaign

The Committee were given a presentation on a proposed carbon reduction marketing campaign to be carried out during 2009 which was aimed at

targeting congestion on various main routes in West Yorkshire, advising the general public about how they could reduce their carbon footprints by using public transport, particularly by promoting MetroCards for multi modal, multi operator travel and working with Travel Plan Network employers to encourage the use of alternative modes of transport to the car for travelling to work.

Members were given the opportunity to provide input and feedback on the proposed campaign.

Economic Climate and the Public Transport Industry

Members received a presentation regarding the general economic downturn, which was having a significant effect in West Yorkshire, including increased unemployment. Members were asked for their views on what Metro and the public transport industry in general could do to support people affected by the current economic climate.

Comment was made that a cheaper fare structure, particularly with regard to bus fares, could assist the unemployed and jobseekers. In response, it was stated that the bus operators currently offered discounted products for the unemployed.

The Committee also expressed concern at the level of fuel tax rebate received by bus operators. This was significantly less than the 100% rebate offered to other transport/industry sectors. The Committee urged Metro to continue to press for an improved arrangement for the public transport industry.

Members were thanked for their suggestions to all the consultation items and asked to forward any further ideas or comments on the questionnaires provided at the meeting.

RESOLVED - That PCC members' feedback and views be noted.